

Switch to Forward-Facing Too Soon

Rear-facing seats provide more support to the child's head, neck, and back and are designed to distribute the forces of a crash across their entire body. A child should remain rear-facing for **as long as possible** until they outgrow their car seat by reaching the maximum height or weight limit allowed by the seat manufacturer. If the child is not at least two years old when they outgrow the seat, however, they should be moved into another rear-facing seat with higher height and weight limits.

Rear-facing is **5X safer!**

Incorrect Use of the Harness

The purpose of the harness is to keep the child secured in the car seat. If any of the following mistakes are made, the child is at risk of sliding up and out of the seat in a crash.

- **Wrong harness slots.** The harness straps should be at or below a rear-facing child's shoulders and at or above a forward-facing child's shoulders. The crotch strap should be in the slot closest to the child and adjusted as the child grows.
- **Harness too loose.** The harness straps should be snug on the child and not allow any slack. Use your thumb and index finger to pinch the webbing at the child's shoulder. If the webbing touches, the straps are too loose and need to be tightened.
- **Retainer clip too low.** The retainer clip should be secured at armpit level. This will prevent the straps from falling off the child's shoulders.



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Buckle Up For Love is an educational program aimed at reducing the number of child motor vehicle injuries and deaths in Utah by increasing proper car seat installation and use.

Contact the Utah Safety Council for free educational materials or to set up a free car seat check today!

Utah Safety Council
1574 West 1700 South, Suite 2A
Salt Lake City, UT 84104

801.746.SAFE (7233)
UTAHSAFETYCOUNCIL.ORG

If you observe an unrestrained child in a moving vehicle, report the Utah license plate number, date and time, location, and description of the incident to Buckle Up For Love's hotline:

800.887.KIDS

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Most Common Car Seat Mistakes

Over **70%** of car seats are installed or used incorrectly.



[UTAHSAFETYCOUNCIL.ORG](https://www.UTAHSAFETYCOUNCIL.ORG)

Not Reading the Manuals

It's extremely important to read the car seat owner's manual as well as the car seat portion of the vehicle owner's manual before installing the seat. Both manuals will provide you with critical information regarding your seat and vehicle. Additionally, you need to comply with instructions in **both** manuals, not just one or the other. If you don't have a manual, visit the manufacturer's website or give them a call for another copy.

Using the Wrong Seat for the Child

Make sure your child is riding in a seat appropriate for their age, height, and weight. The car seat will have a label indicating the height and weight limits. Follow these general age guidelines:

0-2 years: Rear-facing



2-4 years: Forward-facing



4-8 years: Booster seat

Once your child has outgrown their forward-facing seat, they should be in a booster until they reach 4'9" and can fit in a seatbelt properly.



Using an Expired, Recalled, or Used Car Seat

Car seats generally expire six years after the manufacture date. The plastic will degrade over time and loses its durability. Recycle expired car seats at your nearest car seat recycling center.



Child safety seats are sometimes recalled by the manufacturer for reasons related to the crashworthiness of the restraint. Register your car seat to be notified of such recalls and receive further instruction from the manufacturer.

Never buy a used car seat unless you know its exact history. Refer to National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) guidelines to find out when it's safe to use a seat after a crash.

Improper Use of Seat Belts or Lower Anchors

If installing the car seat with a seat belt, make sure you use the correct belt path for the direction of the seat (rear-facing or forward-facing). Additionally, the seat belt system must lock in order to secure the car seat to the vehicle seat. Check your vehicle owner's manual to find out how your seat belt system locks.

If installing the car seat using LATCH or the lower anchors, make sure you install the seat in an approved seating position. Many people install car seats in the middle seat using the side seats' lower anchors, which is usually not acceptable. Check your vehicle owner's manual for the approved seating positions for lower anchors.

Vehicles and car seats have weight limits for using the lower anchors. Usually, the combined weight of the child and the seat must be 65 pounds or under. Make sure you know what the limit is for your seat and vehicle.

Never use the seat belt and lower anchors at the same time unless it's allowed by both the vehicle and the car seat manufacturers. Car seats are only tested with one system or the other, and using both puts too much strain on the seat in the event of a crash.

Car Seat Too Loose

Car seats should not move more than an inch side-to-side or front-to-back when pulled at the belt path (not the top of the seat). This should be tested with your weak hand. If the seat moves more than an inch, re-install it by putting weight into the seat while tightening the seat belt or lower anchor connectors.

Incorrect Recline Angle

Rear-facing car seats should be installed at a 30-45 degree angle. Most seats are equipped with some form of an angle indicator to help you. The angle is critical for newer babies that lack head and neck control. If the seat is too upright, it may cause their heads to flop forward and can cut off their air supply.



If you're unable to achieve the correct angle, many car seat manufacturers allow a rolled towel or pool noodle to be placed underneath the car seat to adjust the angle. Check both manuals to make sure you do what's approved for your car seat and your vehicle.

Other Considerations

- Only use aftermarket products (car seat covers, mirrors, toys, etc.) from the same manufacturer as your car seat. Other products haven't been tested with the seat and can alter its performance in a crash.
- Be aware of loose objects in the vehicle. Those objects become projectiles in a crash and may cause harm to children and other passengers.
- Don't buckle up kids with their coats on. The coat will compress in a crash and leave too much room between the child and the harness. Instead, put their coats on backwards over their harness or keep them warm with a blanket.
- Keep children under 13 years old in the back seat.
- Wear your seatbelt! Children learn by example.
- Get your seat checked by a Certified Child Passenger Safety Technician. Contact us for a free check or visit UTAHSAFETYCOUNCIL.ORG to find a technician in your area.